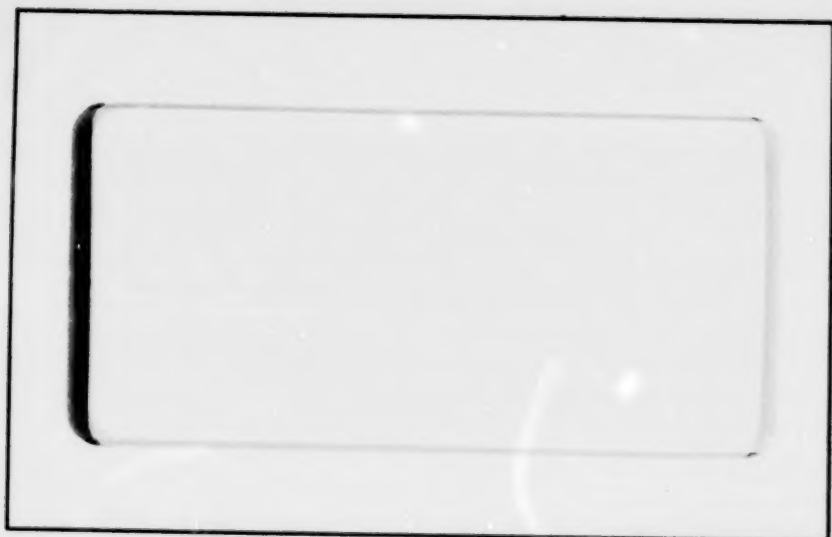




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Discussion Paper No. 31

**STREETS BENEATH THE TOWERS:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF TORONTO'S DOWNTOWN
UNDERGROUND PEDESTRIAN MALL SYSTEM**

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**STREETS BENEATH THE TOWERS:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF TORONTO'S DOWNTOWN
UNDERGROUND PEDESTRIAN MALL SYSTEM**

Lindy Goodman

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Underneath the office towers in the downtown core of Metropolitan Toronto lies a major pedestrian system, perhaps one of the largest of its kind in the world, containing everything from retail shops and food markets to a theatre and restaurants. Over the years, this underground community has become a popular place. During the peak lunch-time period, crowds of downtown workers descend below to use the stores and lunch at one of the wide array of eating establishments. The pedestrian system offers its users the convenience of being able to find practically any amenity that might be required during the course of the day without ever having to go outdoors or stray too far from the office. It is the attraction of proximity - having anything that might be desired close to one's place of work - that has led to the system's increasing popularity. As a result, the underground pedestrian system has been expanded, so that it now connects many of the major office complexes throughout the downtown core. Though the system initially developed along the Bay Street corridor, it has recently begun to spread to new office developments as far west as University Avenue, east toward Yonge Street and north to Dundas Street. (See the map of the downtown underground pedestrian mall system, which appears at the end of this paper.)

Certainly, as the underground system has grown over the last 18 years it has had its detractors, but at the same time the acceptance and desirability of the concept has

taken such a hold on the minds of many individuals involved in the development of the downtown core that its continued growth remains almost inevitable. As large-scale developments continue to sprout in the city core, each containing underground retail arcades as a basic feature, more connections to the present system seem highly likely. No major development in the core wants to be excluded from the system and judging from its continued growth to date despite the extremely high costs of understreet connections, none will be left out.

The concept of an underground pedestrian system for the downtown core of Toronto began to evolve more than 30 years ago. During the post-war period, the core was becoming increasingly crowded. Sidewalks were congested and automobile traffic was burgeoning to the point that the growing conflict between pedestrians and vehicles was becoming a serious and potentially hazardous problem. The physical layout in the downtown area offered little opportunity for intra-block routes that might have provided a diversion for the sidewalk crowds. The core was divided into large blocks - some as large as 9 acres in size - with no intra-block, breaks. The buildings tended to face one street and rarely, if ever, filled the entire width of a block, leaving little opportunity for pedestrian routes through lobbies or main floor areas. Officials in Toronto perceived the growing congestion to be a serious problem

requiring immediate attention. Pedestrians and vehicles were not compatible in the downtown core as it was structured. Somehow the two had to be separated. One of the many possible solutions considered was the idea of an enclosed underground pedestrian way that could be built beneath the buildings, thereby separating vehicles and pedestrians vertically.¹

Vertical separation was a concept that was slowly gaining in popularity by the mid-1950's. Rockefeller Centre with its large recessed plaza set in the middle of the block had long been considered by many to be one of the prime examples of vertical separation. Paths leading to the centre of the block provided an intra-block route which served the purpose of diverting crowds from the busy Manhattan streets. More importantly, once inside, pedestrians were offered a variety of amenities and activities located in the large plaza and skating area, one level below grade, which provided a relief from the noise and pollution of the vehicular traffic on the streets.

Another form of vertical separation - underground pedestrian ways or tunnels - could also be found in various American cities. In the 1950's, Houston boasted perhaps the most extensive tunnel system in a downtown area. Houston's tunnels, connecting various buildings with each other as well as to parking garages, were purely private ventures,

developed, owned and operated by the private sector for the convenience of the office workers. The system was popular and by the late-1950's, Houston had 6 or 7 pedestrian tunnels beneath its streets. A decade later, 32 major office buildings, hotels and parking facilities had direct access to the various tunnels beneath the streets of Houston.²

Whether the Toronto Planning Department was fully aware of the Houston tunnel system is not known. Nonetheless, by the mid-1950's, it too was considering the use of underground pedestrian routes as a possible solution to alleviate the sidewalk congestion and create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians. As early as 1956, during the initial discussions of a development project that was ultimately to become the Eaton Centre, Vince Ponte and William Zeckendorff, developers of Place Ville Marie, submitted plans that included an underground retail mall for use by pedestrians. The actual mall in the Eaton Centre is vastly different from the model that Zeckendorff proposed but the concept of an enclosed retail area located below grade was common to them both.³

In the late 1950's, the City of Toronto Planning Department set out on the task of examining the need for providing increased facilities for pedestrian movement in the downtown area as a means for reducing the existing conflict between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. The

Planning Department's solutions, published in a 1959 Planning Report entitled The Pedestrian in Downtown Toronto, included proposals for walkways through the centre of blocks, enclosed retail malls, sheltered sidewalks and the vertical separation of pedestrians and vehicles - not specifically a total underground approach but a distinct bi-level separation nonetheless.⁴

A few years later, in 1961, the concept of vertical separation became a reality in Canada with the opening of Place Ville Marie in Montreal. Place Ville Marie represented a physical realization of the ideas and concepts that the planners in Toronto had been grappling with for close to 10 years. Here was an office tower which had beneath it a retail arcade for the exclusive use of pedestrians. Vehicles were left one level above, while pedestrians could roam in this climate-controlled mall protected from the noise and inclement weather outside. One of the many individuals who visited and viewed this exciting new development at its opening was the Director of the City of Toronto Planning Board, Matthew Lawson, who returned to Toronto optimistic that a similar underground system could be developed in Toronto.

Soon after Lawson's return from Montreal, opportunities arose to lay the groundwork for an underground pedestrian system in Toronto. Yolles and Rotenberg, a major developer in the downtown core, was completing assembly of a site on

Richmond Street West between Bay and York Streets. They had managed to secure a starting tenant for their first proposed office tower, the Richmond-Adelaide Centre, and plans for its construction were well on their way. Lawson approached Yolles and Rotenberg and proposed his scheme for an underground pedestrian street that would connect all of the major office complexes found in the core. He asked the developers to look into the possibility of including retail shopping below grade, a pedestrian arcade that would ultimately tie in with a larger underground street system.

Yolles and Rotenberg conducted a market analysis of the idea and came to the conclusion that the market did indeed want the amenities that could be offered in a retail arcade but apparently did not want to see those amenities. The best place for retail in a prestigious building, such as the Richmond-Adelaide Centre was intended to be, was underground. Thus emerged Yolles and Rotenberg's philosophy for their new development, which was to build a prestigious office complex with a "quality image" that they believed people desired, an office development with a variety of amenities that would prove to be attractive to tenants but would not be visible from the street. Whether the retail arcade would be economically profitable or not (and it was not at the start) did not matter for the profit would be derived to the office building in terms of attracting

tenants.⁵

The City's desire for underground retail arcades in major office developments was given another boost at this time as plans for the Toronto Dominion Centre began to unfold. Since the inception of the Toronto Dominion Bank in 1955, the result of a merger of two of Canada's largest banks, bank officials had been interested in building new office headquarters in downtown Toronto as a key part to their marketing strategy of establishing a more prominent role in the banking world. The bank was approached at that time by Matthew Lawson, who saw the future of Toronto's downtown as being dependent upon the strong participation of corporate business. Lawson urged Allen T. Lambert, the president of the Toronto Dominion Bank, to consider something larger than a head office building. He proposed that they consider building an office complex in the downtown financial district that would be a dramatic testimony to Toronto's growth and industrial success. Bank officials were receptive to the idea and began to consider large-scale proposals that would produce their desired image for a bank headquarters.

In 1961, Toronto Dominion officials were attracted to a development proposal put forward by CEMP Investments Limited. CEMP proposed a joint project which would allow the bank to retain control over the land on which their headquarters stood. The project, twice the size that the

Toronto Dominion had originally envisioned, would be managed by a company set up for that purpose. As well, the new company would control the remainder of the development site. The partnership was set up and Toronto Dominion Centre Limited came into existence.⁶

During 1961 and 1962, Toronto Dominion Centre Limited undertook a thorough study of the long-term trends in redevelopment in the financial core. They also analyzed existing and future plans for public transportation and possible alternative locations for their major development. Their study resulted in the decision to proceed with the redevelopment of nearly seven acres of the city block to the south and west of the King-Bay intersection. Their proposal was to build not merely something larger and different than anything Toronto had seen to that date but to construct "a city within the city, a monument to Canada's progress, resources, industrial and technical accomplishments and to Canadians themselves"⁷. For this purpose, in late 1962, Toronto Dominion Centre Limited hired two leading architectural firms, John B. Parkins & Associates and Bregman and Hamann to work on the project. As well, Mies van der Rohe was brought in as chief designer.⁸

As plans for the complex progressed, the issue of service facilities and amenities for the tenants was considered closely. The designers and planners of the building recognized that their complex would attract a large

workforce. The ultimate population projection for the three office towers was 25,000 individuals working in the development on a daily basis. It was felt that these individuals would require certain basic amenities within the office development such as food, drugs, postal and parking facilities and that the best location for these services would be below grade.

From the outset, the developers looked into the possibility of installing a full postal station on the premises. They contended that the demand for a full post office would certainly exist and the benefits derived for the tenants in terms of speedy mail delivery and other postal services located close at hand would certainly be attractive features for prospective tenants. As the plans for the postal station developed, the design for the below-grade area began to expand into plans for a full shopping arcade with retail stores, services and restaurants of all kinds and even a movie theatre seating 350. The project was becoming a town underground, a centre containing all the services and amenities that tenants of the Toronto Dominion Centre might desire during the course of their day.⁹

During this same time period, [the City of Toronto Planning Board did two things] to augment and support its desire for underground retail arcades and ultimately a comprehensive underground pedestrian street system. In order to provide an incentive to developers, they decided to

exempt any below-grade retail arcades from allowable density calculations.¹⁰ Secondly, they published an illustrated plan in 1963 which set out ways and means of improving the downtown. One of the primary foci of the Plan for Downtown Toronto was the use of vertical separation of vehicles and pedestrians through the development of a system of pedestrian routes. The plan endorsed vertical separation as a possible solution to the existing congestion problems and recommended that a comprehensive study of the concept be carried out. This comprehensive study was to analyze the need for separation, alternative solutions, the effects of vertical separation, the technical and financial feasibility of the scheme, means of implementation and finally design details.¹¹

The 1963 Plan for Downtown Toronto provides an interesting insight into the trend of thought prevalent among planners at that time. The existing downtown form was perceived as efficient but boring:

Downtown Toronto was laid out and developed as a regular grid of streets and blocks without thought for open spaces or focal points...The streets were mostly of standard width and the blocks of land were large, especially around the present financial centre further reducing the possibility of an interesting variety of character.¹²

As well, the planners felt that the existing street patterns were slowly becoming obsolete. Impressive statistics were

compiled to show that by 1980 pedestrian volumes would exceed the capacity of many of the sidewalks. It was also felt that projected new buildings would not fit within the traditional pattern of blocks found in the financial core. The inevitable results of a lack of visual cohesion and real functional chaos were foreseen unless some physical solutions were found.

The main thrusts of the prescribed solutions were based on the themes of upgrading streets, reinforcement of the special identity of districts and the creation of amenities for pedestrians. As the actual intentions of the planners became more evident, it became clear that the cornerstones of their ideas lay in the progressive removal of the street as the "organizer and focus of urban form"¹³. The proposed solutions were going to redefine the function of the street by producing separate networks for pedestrians and vehicles. The planners proposed that the vertical separation be accomplished by leaving vehicles on grade and relocating pedestrians to below-grade malls or to a few bridge links or "skyway" connections over streets. The planners also endorsed the development of single-use free standing towers set away from the street in a new kind of open space called a plaza that would include fountains, sculptures and tree planting.¹⁴ To a certain extent, by endorsing this line of thought the City was calling into question the ability of the street to function as it had previously. However, in

the attempt to find a solution to the problem, the new role of the street was not clearly defined. The street, whose vibrancy was dependent on its use by both pedestrians and vehicles, was being deprived of an essential element. No alternative was being provided. The street was being left to function in a very different manner and yet no one was quite sure what that different manner would be. Only time would tell if this new role for the street was a move for the better or not.

The 1963 Plan for Downtown Toronto was eventually adopted in principle by City Council and many aspects of it were implemented. The completion of the Richmond-Adelaide Centre in 1966 and the official opening of the Toronto Dominion Centre in May 1968 revealed the City's endorsement of office tower developments set back and separated from the street. The inclusion of retail arcades beneath these two complexes pulled the pedestrian traffic even further away from the streets, and in these two areas of the financial core the planners had certainly managed to alleviate sidewalk congestion.

The City continued to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive pedestrian system through the mid-1960's as it concentrated on the redevelopment of the block along Queen Street West immediately across from the Civic Square. Consensus had developed in the Planning Department that the block in question ought to be redeveloped with great care in

keeping with the fact that it formed the southern boundary for the Civic Square. The eastern portion of the block was owned by three major landowners, Dennis Commercial Properties, Toronto Dominion Bank and 390 Bay Street Corporation Limited. In 1966, an agreement was reached between the developers and the City that would ensure a unified development of their lands. The agreement also provided for the development of an integrated shopping mall situated below grade that would eventually run through the entire block in order to accommodate the need for pedestrian movement between the various developments.¹⁵

The redevelopment of the western portion of the block was approached in a unique way. In light of the success of the design competition for the new City Hall, the Commissioner of Development for the City of Toronto proposed that a similar approach be used for this site. An international competition was set up. The prospectus for the competition listed some mandatory requirements which each entrant had to adhere to, requirements that reflected the City's strong desire for the development of an underground pedestrian system. One of the mandatory requirements stated that:

The competitors will be required to show adequate proposals for the following:
Pedestrian movement at and/or below grade throughout the Site from east to west and... access to a pedestrian tunnel to traverse Richmond Street West opposite the development of Yolles & Rotenberg

known as the Richmond-Adelaide Centre.¹⁶

A further requirement went on to state that:

The Nominated Developer will be required at his cost to allow within the design for a pedestrian below grade connection between the development and the Richmond-Adelaide Centre...The precise location of this tunnel and its point of connection with the Richmond-Adelaide Centre shall be the subject of future negotiations between the Nominated developer, Yolles & Rotenberg and the City of Toronto.¹⁷

As well, the parking authorities agreed to the provision of pedestrian and/or vehicular underground connections from the site on the understanding that the developers would bear all of the costs involved. The requirement stated that:

The Nominated Developer will be required to provide at his cost and to allow within the design for pedestrian below grade connections between the development and the Civic Square Garage.¹⁸

The developers were also required to consider the integration of design elements that would allow for the extension of an above-ground walkway across Queen Street to connect with the walkway bordering the Civic Square in order to provide a formal visual framework linking the two areas and allow for pedestrian passage between the two sites.¹⁹

The international competition for the site proved to be a dismal failure. Only a handful of local firms submitted proposals, and in the end the consortium representing Four

Seasons Limited and Sheraton Hotels won the bid to develop the Competition Site. With the completion of the adjoining connections from the hotel to Nathan Phillips Square and the Richmond-Adelaide Centre in January, 1973, however, the dream of the pedestrian underground street system was finally being realized. And the City had successfully managed to get their plans implemented without any direct financial investment.

In August, 1968, Neil J. McKinnon, Chairman of the Board of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, announced the plans for Commerce Court. This office development was to comprise three new buildings and the renovation of the old Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce headquarters on King Street West, all surrounding a 1-acre courtyard. The complex would include an underground concourse to allow pedestrians to move freely between the four buildings and the King Street subway station. Unlike the Toronto Dominion Centre, the concourse level was being planned mainly to house banking facilities. Some boutiques and restaurants were to be included but these were geared generally to the anticipated demands of the tenants. The retail arcade was not going to be as extensive as that in the Toronto Dominion Centre. It was planned to include only the basic amenities that tenants might require. Bank officials did not want to attract a great deal of additional pedestrian traffic from outside the complex.

Early in the planning of the Commerce Court, bank officials were approached by Alderman Fred Beavis and the Commissioner of Development, Matthew Lawson, who came to request that the CIBC build a connection across Bay Street to the Toronto Dominion Centre. When asked if the connection to the underground system was a condition for granting a permit, Beavis said no. The bank officials considered the idea for a while and concluded that they were not in favour of a connection to the Toronto Dominion Centre until a connection from the T.D. Centre to Union Station was completed. In view of the Commerce Court's planned connection to the Yonge Subway line, the estimated traffic flow that a Bay Street connection would generate was thought to be formidable. Since the pedestrian traffic would have to run through the banking facilities, it was thought that this connection would cause too much noise and generate too great a security risk. Thus, the official opening of the Commerce Court in June, 1971 marked the first direct underground connection to a subway line but did not offer the tenants of the T.D. Centre a direct underground link to the King Street subway station.²⁰

The planning study on vertical separation that had initially been recommended in 1963 finally came to fruition in May 1969 with the publication of On Foot Downtown. The report was a joint effort by the Commissioner of Public Works, the Chief Planner, the Commissioner of Development

and the City Solicitor, prepared at the request of the Board of Control for the City of Toronto. It identified seven critical goals for planning:

1. examining the needs of pedestrians in downtown Toronto;
2. evaluating the quality of existing provisions;
3. establishing design principles for developing pedestrian facilities;
4. outlining a potential comprehensive system for movement on foot in downtown Toronto and for relating pedestrian movement to transportation facilities;
5. ascertaining those areas of the comprehensive pedestrian system where redevelopment appeared likely to occur in the near future and where achievement of pedestrian connections was critical;
6. recommending action by the City to promote a pedestrian system in downtown Toronto;
7. recommending an outline of the various responsibilities of the City and of the private developers in relation to pedestrian facilities, such as the heating, maintenance, security, cleaning and lighting of pedestrian ways.²¹

The findings published in the report revealed a strong concern on the part of the planners that the downtown grow and develop in order to attract "investment and brains in competition with other centres in the region and the continent"²². The total image that Downtown Toronto presented both to the people who worked there and to visitors was an essential element in achieving this goal. People, the planners claimed, were increasingly demanding of

the quality of their environment. It was as pedestrians that people formed their impressions and opinions of the quality of the downtown. Hence, it was imperative that pedestrian facilities be improved, not merely because of the problems of congestion, important as they were, but also because of the need to build for the convenience, comfort and excitement of the users of the downtown area. Effective pedestrian facilities were a major vehicle that would help prevent the downtown core from becoming obsolete.²³

On Foot Downtown identified the major problems of the downtown core related to pedestrian movement: the overcrowding of sidewalks; congested intersections; congested access points to subway stations at peak periods; personal danger; extreme climatic conditions which prevail over a large part of the year; lack of varied and distinctive open spaces and green areas; and the danger that the range and mixture of activities available to pedestrians was diminishing. The planners then suggested a series of design principles that ought to be followed in order to achieve a comprehensive and effective pedestrian system.

The report emphasized the importance of developing a system of intra-block routes, but noted that an essential extension of this concept was the integration of public and private spaces. Intra-block routes through private developments alone would not solve the problems at hand. Links between blocks through publicly owned spaces were

necessary. It was suggested that the links be located either above or below the streets in order to separate the pedestrians from vehicular traffic and ease the flow of both elements. It was also felt that new developments located near subway stations expand the capacity of the stations by providing direct access from the subway trains to the surrounding office developments. The intention was to provide continuity, with a continuous walkway system as an alternative to the sidewalk system, separate from vehicular traffic, and incorporated with primary transportation modes. Each element was to be considered part of a wholly integrated transportation system.²⁴

The planners went on to investigate the design elements of the system. Though a protected walkway system was considered to be a way to deal with the adverse climatic conditions that Torontonians experience a great part of the year, the plan specifically stated that these climatic conditions did not warrant an "underground" pedestrian system totally excluded from the natural and city environments. Open spaces, especially small quiet green areas, were also important features to include. As well, it was necessary that the system provide a variety of activities, experiences and distinctive places through which people could walk. One of the planners' major objectives was to expand the choices available to the pedestrians in the downtown area. The development of the pedestrian system

was one of the tools through which this goal could be achieved. The actual quality of the design of the pedestrian system was also discussed, and suggestions made included clear sign directions, proper seating, storage lockers and the inclusion of significant and memorable places, especially at major pedestrian junctions, in order to provide a sense of location and orientation.²⁵

The reluctance of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce to join the system combined with the hesitation of the Royal York to bear the total costs of a connection to Union Station were clear indications to the City that its role in the development of the pedestrian walkway was due for re-evaluation. It was felt that some developers and owners of strategic properties in the downtown core were looking to the City for more positive leadership and active participation in the general planning and formation of the mall system. Those who were planning malls wanted to be certain that their malls would be part of the overall scheme, and those with existing developments were concerned about the possible costs of accommodating peripheral connections. The planners called on the City to adopt a principle of participation not only in the planning of the system but also in financing it. They suggested that the City agree to pay up to 50% of the gross cost of constructing below street crossings. There were four important crossings that were essential to the establishment

of the main route of the pedestrian system and it was suggested that the City concentrate its efforts on showing an active interest in the establishment of these locations. The four prime locations were:

1. under Bay Street from the Toronto Dominion Centre to Commerce Court so as to achieve a direct link to the King Street subway station;
2. under Wellington Street and Piper Street in order to join the Toronto Dominion Centre with Union Station;
3. under York Street in order to join the Toronto Dominion Centre with the St. Andrews subway station;
4. from the Richmond-Adelaide Centre, across Adelaide Street to the Toronto Star Site and subsequently across King Street to the Toronto Dominion Centre.

By participating in these crossings, it was felt that the City would be able to establish the main route of the pedestrian system more definitely and would generate more interest on the part of developers in linking up to the system. Cost participation was viewed as an enticement to developers and as a tool that the Planning Department could utilize to determine clearly the intentions of developers and owners of existing buildings along the route.

Other incentives were suggested to instill more active participation in the development of the scheme although most of these were never actually implemented. A density bonus

of 5 times the underground mall area which the developer undertook to construct was to be applied to the gross floor area of the development allowed under the existing zoning. This bonus was seen as an important compensating factor for the developer's share in the cost of the construction of the below street link. It was also suggested that an assessment or tax forgiveness be granted on mall areas constructed by developers as long as these areas lay on the main designated pedestrian route. Finally, the establishment of a pedestrian mall system was to be a priority when negotiations with developers for the exchange or sale of City-owned lands, streets and interests located along the main route of the system were conducted.²⁶

On Foot Downtown was given final approval by City Council in June, 1969. The report provided the basis for participation in the construction of the two tunnels below King Street and Wellington Street. In both situations, the City agreed to pay 50% of the construction cost to a ceiling limit while the developers at either end agreed to share the other half of the cost. The Wellington Street tunnel, between the Toronto Dominion Centre and the newly constructed Royal Bank Plaza, was built in 1976 and cost the City \$247,000. The King Street tunnel connecting First Canadian Place and the Toronto Dominion Centre was constructed a year later in 1977. The City paid \$523,315 towards its completion.

The policies outlined in On Foot Downtown reflected an underlying endorsement of development in the downtown core. This pro-development stance was stated even more strongly in the City of Toronto's 1969 Official Plan, which favoured unlimited development. Council's policy was to sponsor "the location in the Central Area of the City of establishments which serve the entire [Toronto-centred] region or larger area"²⁸ and to encourage further "concentration of financial and related business of retail trade...[and] commercial office buildings".²⁹

Development continued in the downtown financial core through the early 1970's at a rapid pace. By 1972, the Toronto Dominion Centre boasted a second tower and was planning its third, the Commerce Court complex had been officially opened, the design for First Canadian Place, the Bank of Montreal's office development at King and Bay, had been chosen and plans for the Royal Bank Plaza were in the final stages.

Decisions made by City Council during that time reflected a desire for an underground pedestrian street system connecting the major developments located along or near Bay Street from Front Street to City Hall. In the Approvals by Council for the closing and conveyance of Millstone Lane and the easterly portion of Rossen House Lane (December 8, 1971 and February 16, 1972), the City insisted that Toronto Dominion Centre Limited provide knock-out

panels to permit connections to an underground mall system some time in the future. In response to this condition, the developers extended the existing pedestrian shopping concourse west to York Street so as to allow for the possibility of a connection across that street if it was required in the future.³⁰ Negotiations between the City and Olympia & York, the developers of First Canadian Place, led to an agreement in September, 1972 that the developer would participate as required in the planning and in bearing his portion of the financial cost of constructing below-grade pedestrian links to connect to those of the Richmond-Adelaide Centre to the north and to those of the Toronto Dominion Centre to the south in co-operation with the City of Toronto and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.³¹

The establishment of the underground pedestrian street was imminent. The plans were in place. Financial incentives were set. Strong support for the idea could be found amongst all of the actors in the downtown development scene. It was only a matter of time before the system would be realized.

In December, 1972, however, a new Council was sent to City Hall. The pro-development Council members who managed to retain their seats found themselves face-to-face with a new moderate group of aldermen and a so-called "Reform Group" that was intent on changing the goals of Council and, among other things, the way rampant development was

overtaking the financial core. The underground pedestrian system was also considered a cause for concern in view of the perceived effects it was having on street life in the core. The underground retail arcades were attracting large crowds while the stores on the street level were struggling to maintain their existence. Street life in the downtown core was stagnating while life down under was blossoming. Members of the Reform Group saw a contradiction in this trend: The streets of the core, which were supposed to be the prime indicators of urban vitality, were dying. Something was going wrong. If the underground system was the cause of this drain, then support for it had to stop. The life from below had to be drawn back up or the entire downtown would suffer.

Barely two months after taking office, the new Council led by Mayor David Crombie requested the Chief Planner, the Development Commissioner and the City Solicitor for guidance on how it would be best to restrain what was happening in the core. By June, 1973, the Council received a report that outlined the direction that their actions ought to take. It was clear that the 1953 zoning by-law and plan policy that was essentially the basis for all planning and development to that date was outmoded. It was felt that the downtown was in desperate need of a new official plan. However, such a plan would require two years to prepare and officials recommended a temporary measure to help stem the rampant

development. A 24-month "Holding" by-law was suggested. This by-law would limit development in the downtown core to buildings less than 45 feet high or 40,000 square feet in size. The by-law was not intended to be a freeze: criteria for exemption from the size limit included compatability with the character and function of the area, timing and phasing of the project so that it would not unduly tax public services, and conformity with the draft policies being set for the new downtown zoning by-law and plan. The day that the criteria came to Council for approval, the reformists outnumbered the moderates and Old Guard. The reformists took advantage of the situation and managed to have two additional criteria added: satisfactory transportation facilities had to exist to serve the project; and historical buildings were to be maintained if at all possible.

In September of 1973, the Council publicly announced its intention to pass the holding by-law. Despite the loud outcry from developers with real estate interests in the financial core, the by-law was passed on December 7, 1973. It was to last for a two-year period, beginning retroactively on September 15, 1973 and continuing until September 15, 1975.

The holding by-law did not deal specifically with the issue of the underground system and its effects on the street life. The by-law was more directly concerned with

reducing the rate of office development in the core. As office development would decline, however, so too would opportunities for the underground system to expand. It was only in this indirect way that the underground pedestrian system was affected by the holding by-law.

Nonetheless, the holding by-law reflected a change in attitude amongst members of City Council, a change that questioned the policies that had been in effect until that time. This change in attitude was coupled with a change in the priorities of the members of City Council and led to the withdrawal of financial support for subsequent proposals for underground tunnels. Previous agreements would be honoured but the City was unlikely to find even a few dollars, let alone 50% of the cost, to help augment the system, a system that they were not too keen on in the first place.³²

From the outset, the holding by-law proved to be little threat for the developers in the core. For one, the exemptions were given out quite freely. Though the reformists fought any exemptions on the ground that no new major projects should be approved until the research for the new zoning by-law and downtown plan was complete, all applicants seemed to receive approval for their plans. The exemptions seemed so automatic at first that by the middle of 1974, the City solicitors were forced to advise Council to stop dispensing them so freely as it might threaten their chances for winning approval for the by-law at the Ontario

Municipal Board if it appeared that the by-law was meaningless. Secondly, the by-law had been weakened further by including an exemption clause for any development which had already been issued its demolition or building permits and another clause exempting any development whether the project had begun or not. Finally, the Council was allowed to exempt any development "for any other reason" even if the site still carried old buildings.³³

As a result of the building exemptions, one of the most essential links in the pedestrian system was left unaffected by the 45 foot height by-law. Just at the time that the height by-law was publicly announced, the Royal Bank began construction of its major office complex on a portion of the block east of Bay Street between Front and Wellington Streets. The Royal Bank Plaza was being built on a smaller scale than either the Toronto Dominion Centre or Commerce Court. Bank officials were intent on offsetting the "trend [towards] cold inhuman monoliths located in the wide wind-swept...squares".³⁴ They considered these types of developments to be alien not only to people but to nature itself. For their design, they insisted on warmth and vibrancy. They wanted a building whose exterior would reflect and blend with the mood of the seasons and whose interior as well as exterior would be a place for people to enjoy throughout the year. They were concerned that an ever-widening gap existed between the ordinary citizen and

the institutions that provided for their needs and they wanted their complex to bridge that gap. Thus the Royal Bank Plaza was geared towards integrating all the amenities that its users might desire - office, banking, shopping, dining and entertaining - in order to make it "a place where people would feel at home".³⁵

The bank's philosophy of creating a warm and inviting environment led to a new and quite innovative design for the below-grade shopping area. The two levels of shops and boutiques encircled and focused on a three-storey atrium which contained a pool with a waterfall and a large selection of trees and other vegetation, some of which, it was hoped, would eventually reach as high as the ground floor of the banking hall. The Garden Court, as it was called, was to be a 4,000 square foot landscaped interior park. It was designed to make the shopping concourse more attractive by opening up the retail areas so that workers and shoppers could see daylight and be part of the building complex above. The retail mall itself was built with 30-foot wide corridors to help instill a street-like atmosphere and provide as much space as possible to the pedestrians, a consideration of special relevance because of its close proximity to Union Station.³⁶

The location of the Royal Bank Plaza, at the intersection of Bay Street and Front Street, was of prime importance for City officials who were trying to encourage

more use of public transportation by individuals travelling to the downtown area. The Plaza complex with its planned connections to Union Station, the Royal York Hotel and the Toronto Dominion Centre was seen as a crucial link in easing the movement of pedestrians from the subway and train terminals northward to the financial core. The Plaza also offered a combination of sub-surface, ground level and above-grade routes that would give people a choice of how they might travel through this block.³⁷

The City participated financially in the costs of the connecting tunnel that linked the Royal Bank Plaza with the Toronto Dominion Centre. In an agreement signed in August, 1973, a month before the Holding By-law came into effect, the City agreed to pay 50% of the estimated \$494,000 up to a maximum of \$247,000 toward the building of the tunnel. The Royal Bank and Toronto Dominion were responsible for all costs over the above the City's share.³⁸ The Wellington Street tunnel was constructed in 1976, and with the official opening of the retail mall on October 20, 1976, pedestrians were able to pass between the two complexes below grade.

The connection between the Royal Bank and Union Station was not built until 1978. By then, the City's support for the underground system and its policy of participating in the cost of the underground tunnels had been drastically revised. No financial assistance was offered to the Royal Bank and the Toronto Transit Commission.

On January 15, 1974, Council requested that the Planning Board develop guidelines for the interim review of design aspects of development in the downtown core. Using On Foot Downtown as the basis from which to work, the planners devised a number of principles, some of which diverged from those contained in the 1969 policy document. Their conclusions were published in June, 1974, in a planning report entitled On Building Downtown.

The guidelines proposed that street sidewalks at grade should become the primary area of pedestrian activity in the downtown core. Exclusive pedestrian routes ought to be encouraged only as long as the liveliness of activity on the street sidewalks was not reduced. It was recommended that the City undertake the process of upgrading existing publicly-owned lanes and alleys as pedestrian streets so that the continuity of the overall network of pedestrian routes in the core would be maximized. The planners also felt that the City ought to consider the expansion of the sidewalks on streets where existing sidewalks were inadequate for present as well as projected pedestrian traffic. Thus, the separation of pedestrians and vehicles and the development of streets reserved exclusively for pedestrians were still encouraged but in a somewhat modified and more qualified fashion.

Guidelines were also formulated for any new buildings in the Core Area that wished to include retail shopping.

Retail shopping at grade situated along major streets (such as Bay Street, Queen Street and King Street) were to be given top priority. Retail space along minor streets (Wellington Street and Temperance Street for example) were considered more acceptable than the provision of such space on an exclusively pedestrian street but pedestrian streets were deemed more suitable locations than pedestrian walkways in the private realm.

Regardless of the emphasis on street activity at ground level, the planners still acknowledged the importance of the emerging network of pedestrian walkways. They felt that new buildings should extend the pattern of pedestrian movement by providing public walkways at ground level, below ground level and above ground level. It was essential that these three levels of walkways be well connected with each other and with the sidewalks and streets in the public realm. Areas bordering pedestrian routes were also to be made as diverse as possible in terms of activity and amenities for the pedestrian.

The designs of the existing pedestrian walkways situated below ground were called into question and guidelines for future underground walkways were formulated. It was felt that the success of below-ground walkways was dependent upon their clear relationship to the ground level. When clear connections in terms of visibility and direct access between the two levels were missing, the underground

system tended to be disorienting and could even place the primacy of ground level activity in doubt. Hence, the planners felt that any new underground pedestrian system ought to provide views of the ground level, or should link major intersections of pedestrian walkways, sidewalks and streets at ground level.³⁹

Many of the guidelines developed in On Building Downtown found their way into the Central Area Plan, which was published in January, 1977. The plan stated that it was "the policy of Council to encourage street-related retail and service uses in appropriate areas in the Central Core".⁴⁰ All portions of buildings situated below or above grade that were to be used for commercial purposes were from that time onward to be included in the calculation of the commercial gross floor area or commercial density. In the financial district, all of the non-residential gross floor areas aside from the portions to be used for street retail and service uses could not exceed 7.7 times coverage of the lot. As well, commercial density in buildings (aside from the commercial space being used for street-related retail and service uses) was limited to an amount which was 0.3 less than the maximum commercial density allowed in the area. Full commercial density could be achieved only by designating the remaining 0.3 coverage for street-related retail and service uses. Whereas previously bonuses were given for underground retail, now street-related retail

situated on grade was being encouraged.⁴¹

The Central Area Plan revealed a strong desire on the part of the City to boost the development of street-related retail uses. The concept of an underground pedestrian system, though not encouraged to the same extent as before, was nonetheless still accepted as long as design adaptations were made to relate it more strongly to the street. The bonus previously given for the underground retail shopping area was withdrawn and transferred to street-related retail. Financial participation in underground tunnels was withdrawn although the City would honour any agreements already signed.

The final change in policy made by the City with respect to the underground system occurred a year later, in April, 1978. The City of Toronto Planning Board proposed an amendment to that portion of the Central Area Plan that limited commercial density other than street-related retail and service uses to 0.3 times less than the maximum commercial density permitted. The purpose of the amendment was to revise the means of encouraging street-related retail and thereby allocating full commercial density. Density incentive, it was felt, should relate to the amount of the street frontage occupied by street-related retail and service uses rather than to the provision of up to 0.3 times the lot area. The planners proposed that the maximum amount of street frontage required for street-related retail be

limited to 60%. If the developer included 60% of his street frontage for retail, he would be granted the full commercial density allowed for the lot with no restrictions as to where, how or for which uses the density would be allocated. If less frontage was used for retail, the maximum commercial density was to be reduced by an amount up to 0.3 times less than the commercial density permitted for the Area. Thus, the total allowable commercial density would be determined more directly by the amount of street-related retail space included in the project.⁴²

First Canadian Place, the Bank of Montreal's office project, was the major bank development in the core most affected by the City's shift in position. This large two-tower project, located at the north-west corner of King and Bay, was to be built in two phases. The design and plans for the initial 72-storey tower were conceived and drawn up between 1969 and 1971 during the time that the City was actively encouraging the development of an underground pedestrian walkway system. As a result, in September, 1972, the City and the developers of First Canadian Place, Olympia & York, formalized an agreement wherein the Developers agreed

to participate as required in the planning and participate financially in the construction of below-grade pedestrian links to connect to those of the Richmond-Adelaide Centre to the north and to those of the Toronto Dominion Centre to the south in co-operation with

the City of Toronto and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto on the basis recommended by the Commissioner of Development.⁴³

According to this 1972 agreement, the City was obliged to participate financially in the construction of these tunnels although their actual construction did not occur until after the Central Area Plan was in place. In May, 1977, the City signed an agreement to contribute 50% of the estimated \$1,046,000 toward the construction of the King Street tunnel between the Toronto Dominion Centre and First Canadian Place to a maximum of \$523,315. Olympia & York and Toronto Dominion Centre Limited were responsible for the remaining costs, which they agreed to split equally.⁴⁴

The tunnel across Adelaide Street proved to be a more contentious point. By the time the plans for the tunnel were ready in the early 1980's, the City's new policy of no financial participation in the construction of tunnels was quite firmly entrenched. At first, the City refused to participate in any way. Both Olympia & York and Oxford Development Limited, the owner of the Richmond-Adelaide Centre, argued that they would not build any tunnel unless they received some co-operation from the City. The system would remain in two disjointed parts. Eventually, a compromise was worked out whereby the City agreed to contribute \$200,000 toward the \$1.25 million cost, far below the promised 50% share.⁴⁵

The initial phase of First Canadian Place was well under construction by the time the 45-foot height by-law was passed on December 7, 1973 and was largely unaffected by the new by-law. This phase, which included the development of 70% of the total area of the project, comprised a 72-storey tower with a multi-level and climate-controlled retail area. Olympia & York's objective in this development of this entire complex was to create a retail and recreational component of such magnitude that it would attract people to the area. It was the first project that was not merely concerned with providing amenities for its tenants. Rather, Olympia & York contended that it wanted to draw people to the downtown core through its shopping and recreation centre. Only a small percentage of the total area in Phase 1 was designated for this purpose and Olympia & York was counting on the development of their second phase in order to achieve their objective.

With the passing of the 45-foot height by-law, the second phase of First Canadian Place was placed in jeopardy. Although, as it happened, exemptions were given out quite freely at first, Olympia & York found they had to justify the building of their second office tower to a somewhat negative Council. The plans for their second phase were placed on hold while an elaborate and detailed report was compiled to address all of the criteria for exemption. The report, entitled First Canadian Place - King-Bay

Development: Report to City Council, was published in May, 1974. In the report, Olympia & York emphasized and elaborated its objective of drawing shoppers back to the downtown core and recapturing the retail market for downtown Toronto. Statistics were compiled to show how the downtown area had lost its retail viability over the last fifteen years. More and more shoppers were going to the large suburban malls instead of the downtown stores. Any new projects that had been recently completed or were under construction in the downtown core such as the Eaton Centre were only making up for the losses that had occurred during the last decade. Olympia & York theorized that with proper differentiation and designation of no less than 500,000 square feet of retail space, people would regard this portion of the financial district as a prime retail centre. The centre would satisfy the needs and requirements of the working population in the area and would also attract people from other areas in Toronto to the downtown core to shop. In addition, Olympia & York proposed to provide a host of secondary uses to amplify the retail functions of the centre.

The inclusion of a major retail centre of sufficient size to compete with suburban shopping centres necessitated the acquisition of additional lands for the First Canadian Place project. By the summer of 1972, substantial control of the lands for Phase Two had been achieved and the design

for the complex was adopted. The retail development was planned to be built on three levels - a concourse level above grade, a street level and one level below grade. All three levels were going to be interconnected both physically and visually with an external pedestrian promenade and with outdoor podium-level parks. As a consequence, natural light would be introduced to even the lowest pedestrian level.⁴⁶

To a great extent, the design guidelines described in Olympia & York's report to City Council were followed. The results, however, fell short of their expectations. The retail centre has not achieved its goal of attracting a significant number of individuals from outside the downtown area. As in other parts of the system, the activity level of this retail area is exclusively geared to the 9-to-5 working day. The bulk of business is done during the lunch-hour period from 11 to 2, with a relatively minor surge of activity occurring during the late-afternoon period as people head home.

By the late 1970's, Bay Street was graced with four major office developments, each complete with its own pedestrian mall system beneath. It was possible to walk along Bay Street from Union Station through the Royal Bank Plaza, Toronto Dominion Centre to First Canadian Place without ever seeing the street.

The system was gaining in popularity to the extent that

every major office development wanted to be connected. The officials at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, who had originally rejected the notion of a tunnel across Bay Street to the Toronto Dominion Centre, changed their minds by the mid-1970's and sought financial support from the City for the tunnel. By that time, the City was in no mood to assist in the development of the system and would not participate. Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce managed to convince Toronto Dominion Centre Limited to contribute a third of the cost while they were left footing the remainder of the bill. In 1978, the Bay Street tunnel was finally completed and the pedestrian system was joined to the Yonge Street subway line.

In December of 1983, the most recent link in the system was completed with the opening of the Adelaide Street connection from First Canadian Place to the Richmond-Adelaide Centre. It is now possible to travel from Union Station to the City Hall Parking Garage without ever venturing outside. Two major subway stations, Union Station and King Station, can be reached through the system. The four major banking developments are all interconnected and plans for a connection to the Scotia Tower that will be constructed shortly are in the making. There is talk of a connection from the new Sun Life Towers to the system and the possibility exists for two connections from First Canadian Place and Toronto Dominion Centre westward across

York Street to York Centre which is already linked with the St. Andrews subway station on University Avenue. Before long, the entire downtown financial core could very well be interconnected below grade.

The concept of a pedestrian mall system has gained such popularity that the City's change in attitude with regard to financial participation has hardly acted as a deterrent. The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce proceeded with the Bay Street connection even though they received no assistance. In the early 1980's, Oxford Development Limited built a tunnel across York Street joining the National Bank Building with the Richmond-Adelaide Centre at their own expense. And as far as can be determined, the Royal Bank Plaza and the Toronto Transit Commission were responsible for the tunnel across Front Street linking Union Station with the underground walkway system. The costs of building the system are rising, and the underground pedestrian system seems to grow and grow. In all probability, the system will continue to expand within the downtown core between Yonge Street and University Avenue. The underground pedestrian mall system has become so desirable that nothing seems to stand in its way.

The popularity of the system among workers in the core is highly evident and understandable. The retail areas offer everything from food and clothing to theatre and fitness clubs. All can be found beneath the towers and all

are within reach without requiring one to go outdoors. It is the convenience factor that attracts so many to the system - the proximity of the system to the workplace and the protection that the underground offers from the inclement weather that Torontonians experience during a good part of the year.

Major developers who have included retail arcades in their complexes seem to find the concept attractive because retail malls represent one of the ways of achieving a "quality image," as one developer called it, an image that attracts a higher class of tenant and therefore a higher rent.⁴⁸ Additionally, the underground retail arcades located beneath the office towers offer the developers something that is not available to them with on-street retail stores: a large amount of authority and control in determining exactly what activities may or may not occur in their domain. The retail malls are private property, governed by rules set by the developers. Although people may get the impression that the malls are public places, they really are not. Many of the activities that are basic to life on a public street are prohibited in a private retail mall. Bag ladies and men are forbidden refuge in the security and warmth of the malls. Loitering is discouraged. As well, freedom of speech or expression is inhibited. Picketing is not allowed. Nor is the handing out of leaflets by political or religious groups. Basically, the

retail malls are reserved for commercial transactions. Any other type of activity is stringently monitored.⁴⁹ From the developers' perspective, this element of authority is desirable. The uncertainty and spontaneity that street life is known for is eliminated. By controlling what occurs in the malls, the desired image is kept intact. Thus, the underground pedestrian malls have become an attractive feature for developers and workers alike in the downtown core - one that has become so popular that smaller but essentially similar malls have sprung up in other parts of Metropolitan Toronto, from Toronto's Bloor Street to North York's downtown at Yonge and Sheppard.

The underground system has, however, proven to be a "local" attraction, one that is geared to the tenants and workers in the area and one that is utilized exclusively by them. There is no evidence that the system attracts individuals from outside the downtown area. In fact, many individuals living and working outside of the core are unaware of its existence. Olympia & York's objective of competing with suburban shopping malls has certainly not been achieved.

The level of activity in the system reflects its overwhelming reliance on the individuals working in the area. The retail areas come to life during the peak mid-day lunch hours when crowds surge into the underground malls. However, once the workers are back at their desks, the level

of activity falls drastically. So dependent are the retail stores on consumers who work in the office towers in the area, that an increasing number of them are not even bothering to open on Saturdays. There are not enough customers to justify the costs.

On the basis of traditional retail patterns ,it would seem that retail stores require more protracted business activity than this in order to survive. Two of the major developers involved in the underground mall system have denied that this represents a problem here, citing in one case the long mean length of tenancy and in the other the fact that all of the tenants in his retail arcade have been able to opt for a flat rate per square foot rather than the option of paying a percentage of profits for their space.⁵⁰ Still it seems hardly possible that the situation as it now exists is ideal. It would be far more beneficial to the retailers and to the downtown core as a whole if somehow the underground system could attract more consumers throughout the day and into the evening as well. As it stands now, the underground system certainly does not add to the life and activity in the downtown core except for a relatively brief period during the day.

Since the municipal election of 1972, the underground pedestrian system has been left to develop on its own. Though the City once encouraged the growth of the system enthusiastically, the subsequent tendency was to concentrate

on the growth of on-street retailing. Recently, however, the City has again begun to re-evaluate its position. Planners and politicians alike are beginning to recognize once again that the underground exists and can be used to serve a purpose in the revitalization of the downtown core. The underground system is liked and used by many and if it were integrated more closely with the streets above through such things as easily identified access routes, it could serve more effectively as an important pedestrian link. If properly advertised, the system might attract individuals from afar, thereby helping retailers augment their businesses. The City and the developers working together might be able to elaborate and increase the use of the underground system, especially during its long off-peak hours, in order to make it a more successful component of the downtown core. It is important that the underground system not be forgotten. Like it or not, it is an integral part of the downtown scene and its vitality is important for the overall vitality of the entire downtown area.

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36. Telephone Interview with Rollick Sweetman, Project Manager of Royal Bank Plaza, January 25th, 1984.
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41. Ibid, Section 3A.5(e).
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DOWNTOWN UNDERGROUND PEDESTRIAN MALL SYSTEM

— EXISTING } PEDESTRIAN MALL
 — FUTURE } AND/OR WALKWAY
 ▨ SUBWAY STATION

0 150 300 meters

Source: TORONTO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT JAN. 1984

The map shows a detailed street grid of downtown Toronto. Key streets labeled include John Street, York Street, Bay Street, Front Street, Richmond Street, Queen Street, Dundas Street, and University Avenue. The pedestrian mall system is highlighted with solid black lines for existing paths and dashed lines for future paths. Subway stations are marked with hatched rectangular areas. Notable landmarks like the CN Tower and various public buildings are also depicted.

 EXISTING } PEDESTRIAN MALL
 FUTURE } AND/OR WALKWAY
 SUBWAY STATION

A horizontal scale bar with three vertical tick marks. The first tick mark is on the left and is labeled '0'. The second tick mark is in the middle and is labeled '150'. The third tick mark is on the right and is labeled '300 meters'.

Source: TORONTO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT JAN. 1984